

## **Task Force Members**

### **Education: PK-Higher Education**

Care was taken to invite key constituencies from all sectors of education -- early childhood, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education from across the state.

#### **Co-Chairs:**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Task Force identified the following seven areas of concentration as it focused on a seamless, aligned, and result-oriented PK-higher education system:

### **I. Expanded School Options**

In order to provide children with quality education and offer parents a choice in determining the most appropriate place to obtain a quality education for their children, the Task Force recommends the following for expanded school options:

#### **Public schools**

- Provide mandatory intra-district enrollment for public schools.
- Provide voluntary inter-district enrollment for public schools with consideration of space and local school board approval.
- Review regulations on specifications for school facilities.
- Establish Academic Passport Program for students in failing schools.

#### **Charter Schools**

- Review the current legislative requirement for racial quotas.
- Implement multiple authorizing jurisdictions so that a proposed school may be chartered in any jurisdiction.

#### **Home Schools**

- Encourage parents to form collaborative groups for home study.
- Institute a personal \$500 sales tax credit.
- Allow participation in extra-curricular activities within the public school of the student's residence as long as all district and state requirements are met.

#### **Private Schools**

- Institute tax credits for parents.
- Implement a corporate tax credit of \$2,000 for a needs-based individual education passport.
- Develop a plan to access disability scholarships funded through collaboration with federal grants.

### **II. Safety and Discipline**

Learning can only take place when a child is in an environment that is safe and orderly. In order to ensure students are well disciplined and safe, the Task Force recommends the following:

- Fully fund School Resource Officers.
- Encourage video monitoring where visual access is needed.
- Develop and maintain annual School Crisis Plans that incorporate input from law enforcement, School Resource Officers, counselors, psychologists, and nurses.
- Reinstate conduct grades.

- Require and fund youth camps and/or alternative programs based on character development in all middle schools.
- Enforce zero tolerance in truancy.

### **III. Teacher Quality**

Since the teacher is a critical factor in a student's educational success, second only to parents, the Task Force recommends the following:

- Provide training in explicit and systematic phonics for teachers to incorporate into comprehensive reading programs.
- Utilize distance education for professional development.
- Fund block grants to reward meritorious teaching by expanding the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP).
- Develop incentives for teachers tied to teacher performance and student achievement for hard to staff schools.
- Provide trained mentors for teachers in subject and geographic areas that have high turnover rates.
- Develop paid internships for student teachers through collaboration between school districts and teacher education programs.
- Increase teacher salaries to the national level; expand step increases for teachers.

### **IV. Structural Reform**

Since a goal of state government is efficiency and the leveraging of expertise and resources, then structural reform is in order. Therefore, the Task Force recommends the following:

- Appoint, by the Governor, the State Superintendent of Education who would then become a member of the Governor's Cabinet.
- Elect all local school board members and require appropriate training.
- Study school bus operations to determine if efficiency would be achieved through local district control. Facts to consider:
  - 10-12 year bus replacement cycle
  - Specifications and types of buses purchased
  - District's ability to privatize with assistance from state-administered block grants

### **V. Early Childhood**

Continuing the work of early childhood services, through an integrated system of all services affecting children birth to four years, the Task Force recommends the following:

- Form an Early Childhood Readiness Oversight Committee that would have the responsibility to investigate and recommend the coordination and integration of

- programmatic, administrative and fiscal policies and standards for all early education initiatives serving children birth to four years of age (i.e., DSS, DHEC, State Department of Education's Office of Early Childhood, First Steps, Childcare Industry, Child-Find, Head Start, Early Head Start, and other state and federal programs).
- Review the current process for placement of K4 students in order to ensure that those most-at-risk for readiness are served before other students are admitted.
  - Review the federally mandated "Child Find" to assure consistent monthly screenings, referrals and follow-ups for developmentally delayed children, birth to 21 years, in each county.

## **VI. Funding**

To ensure that an infrastructure exists to support the education of South Carolina's youth in a proficient and efficient manner, the Task Force recommends:

- Define "adequate education" and develop a definition of adequate and equitable funding for education.
- Examine current system of taxation as it relates to education funding and how we deliver the funding for an efficient and effective education process.
- Focus all funding activity on identifying and developing sources of stable and fair revenue.
- Prioritize identified spending areas, services, and programs that result, either directly or indirectly, in student achievement.
- Synthesize research that has already been conducted on school funding.
- Establish provision to ensure that sufficient funding is linked to all state mandates that cannot be met without additional resources.

## **VII. Higher Education**

To enhance higher education's capacity to provide the foundation for a diverse economy, a higher standard of living, and a healthier quality of life, the Task Force recommends:

- Examine the role of the current Commission on Higher Education and determine whether or not it should be strengthened from a coordinating to a governing board on higher education.
- Examine state support for higher education to ensure accessibility to public and independent institutions.
- Develop and/or maintain articulation agreements between all technical colleges and four-year institutions of higher education.
- Implement or maintain a system for awarding dual credit for technical courses taken at the high school level.

- Evaluate the feasibility for a capital bond bill for facilities and maintenance.

## **Introduction**

Education improvement initiatives in South Carolina over the last ten years have produced both stellar and unacceptable results. The state's establishment of nationally recognized high standards and accountability resulted in heightened awareness of what every child needs and deserves in a seamless PK-16 educational system.

However, while many schools and students have made significant gains, more than two-thirds of the state's students do not meet the *proficient* level of student achievement as measured by national benchmarks. Consequently, a successful future for South Carolina must be built on positive accomplishments in concert with visionary ideas and a willingness to embrace the kind of change necessary for further improvement. Our education system must ensure that all students raise their academic achievement to higher levels.

### **I. Expanded School Options**

#### **General Statement of the Problem:**

There are irrefutable facts that we must confront in South Carolina: according to the State Department of Education statistics, the dropout rate is at approximately 30 percent and while troublesome, these numbers have been stagnant for a number of years; a growing disparity between Caucasian and African American achievement, Public High School Graduation Rate for South Carolina is about 52.0%, ranking us 50<sup>th</sup> in the recent Morgan Quitno Press Report, only 17% of high school graduates entering the state's technical colleges successfully receive a two-year degree, and only 8% of high school graduates receive a college degree in four years. In addition, we have returned over one million dollars to the US Department of Education because we have not successfully distributed the federal Charter School grant funds over the past 3 years, due to not proceeding in a progressive way to develop Charter Schools.

At the present South Carolina's parents have few choices in education options for their children. According to research concerning education successes, information shows that parents become empowered and more committed when they have authority over their child's education. Free market dynamics will create competition and accountability for schools while ensuring personal academic freedom and equal opportunity for students.

#### **General Statement of Possible Reforms:**

The Governor's choice platform is well structured and balanced. With very minor modifications, proponents of the rights of all children to receive a good education can strongly support his platform.

Choice, despite what its opponents would lead one to believe, is not about destroying public education, but strengthening education as a whole.

### **Specific Breakdown of Possible Reforms :**

#### **Public Schools**

Encourage local districts to develop a local community based choice plan creating the mandatory intra-district enrollment and provide voluntary inter-district enrollment for public schools, enabling parents to select the best school match for their children.

“Our current policies encourage the construction of massive isolated schools that are inaccessible to the communities they serve. One of the keys to improving education is a sense of community where teachers, students and parents all feel a sense of ownership in *their* school.” Governor Mark Sanford’s State of the State Address.

We encourage the General Assembly to pass legislation that caps student population and changes regulations on specifications for school facilities. We recommend limiting elementary schools to 500 students, middle schools to 700 students and high school to 900 students. In line with the “No Child Left Behind,” South Carolina needs to establish a Failing Schools Academic Passport Program. Through this program, a public school student’s parent would be able to request an academic passport for his child to enroll in another school of choice, after attending a public school which has been designated as a failing school for two years. Students enrolled in failing schools would be eligible upon request for an academic passport in the form of a transfer to a public or private school of their choice.

#### **Charter Schools**

South Carolina must have more choice along with the accountability requirements of “No Child Left Behind.” The Charter School movement was founded on restructuring schools in order to produce definitive changes of student performance results. Therefore, we recommend the following:

1. A legislative review of the current legislative requirement of racial quotas in charter schools, currently at 20%.
2. Consideration of a three tiered authorizing jurisdiction board including local, state and appointed charter boards. An applicant would have the ability to be chartered by any of the three boards.
3. A proposal of a five-year vision for the public charter infrastructure in the State. The vision should consider and establish criteria such as: number and size of schools, percentage of statewide students and geographic distribution, number in types of specialized charters serving special needs, role of conversions vs. new schools, role of mixed delivery schools (i.e. charters using e-learning, distant learning and traditional teacher based, combinations etc.).

According to an article in The Southern Regional Institute, agencies that approve and monitor charter schools, face a number of challenges and obstacles. The main challenges being, inadequate finances, politics and a lack of clarity around state charter laws. The proposed three tiered authorizing entity with a five-year infrastructure plan will address some of South Carolina's Charter School challenges.

### **Home Schools**

The Governor's proposed tax credit to parents' of home schooled children is laudable. The Home School movement is worthy of praise and recognition. These parents save all of us money by educating their children without incurring the enormous cost of traditional government public schools. Just as beneficial, these parents save future dollars by preparing their children to succeed and become contributing members of our society. Therefore, we recommend encouraging parents who home school to form collaborative groups for home study, and we recommend legislation of a personal \$500 sales tax credit for books and supplies. There was much discussion within the committee about home school students participating in the extra-curricular activities within the public school system. While all members did not agree, the general consensus was that home school students should be allowed to participate in extra-curricular activities within the public school of the student's residence as long as all District and State requirements are met.

### **Private Schools**

In support of parent's choice for their child's education, the committee recommends instituting a tax credit for parents who educate their children in a private school. The committee also recommends the General Assembly pass legislation to enact a corporate tax credit of \$2000 to be directed to a needs based individual education passport scholarship fund, allowing many prominent companies, large and small, to take advantage of the chance to make a positive impact on children in this state. The passport would allow lower income families expanded educational choices for their children. These choices would include transportation costs to send their children to an out-of-district public school, or tuition for a private school of their choice, which is a new unique approach in helping low income children in South Carolina to receive a better education.

The Task Force recommends that South Carolina develop a plan with the Individual Disability Education Act to create and establish their own scholarship program for students with special needs. If IDEA funds should support innovative approaches to parental involvement and parental choice, these funds could support the design, development, and initial implementation of a state scholarship program that would allow parents to make an independent choice of the appropriate school for their disabled child.

## **II. Safety and Discipline**

### **General Statement of the Problem:**

Recent school tragedies, such as those at Columbine and across the nation, have elevated the concern of safety in schools. According to surveys administered to teachers, parents and students, safety and discipline are two major concerns. The behavioral traits that are acquired in environments with inadequate discipline have long-term negative impacts on learning, teacher retention, and society as a whole. In addition, students cannot reach their academic potential if they feel that their safety and well-being are threatened. However, efforts by dedicated educators and community minded citizens throughout the country have demonstrated that school environments can be turned around within a two-year period.

### **General Statement of Possible Reforms:**

Although efforts have been made to ensure discipline and safety, these efforts have not been consistent across the state. Therefore, the task force recommends that the state should develop a framework for local schools that defines safety and discipline expectations and evaluates levels of risk.

### **Specific Breakdown of Possible reforms:**

The task force recommends that funding is necessary to ensure safety. Therefore, school resource officers should be fully funded, and funds should be made available to middle schools that require youth camps or alternative programs based on character development education. Video monitoring where visual access is needed should be encouraged, and school crisis plans that incorporate input from law enforcement, school resource officers, counselors, psychologists, and nurses need to be developed and maintained. The Task Force also recommends that conduct grades be reinstated and added to report cards. Truancy is still a big problem among our youth in South Carolina. The Task Force recommends a real effort be put forth with parents, students, schools and the court system to work toward a better system for zero tolerance in truancy.

## **III. Teacher Quality**

### **General Statement of Problem:**

If the nation is going to meet the mandate in “No Child Left Behind,” which requires every teacher to be highly qualified by 2005-06, local school boards will have to focus more attention on teacher recruitment and induction efforts, according to warnings from The Alliance of Excellent Education. A new report by the Alliance, New Teacher Excellence: Retaining Our Best, calls for school districts to support induction strategies



such as mentoring to ensure new teachers stay in the profession. Recruiters have trouble “filling a bucket that’s leaking,” says Scott Joftus, Policy Director for The Alliance and author of the report. This problem is even worse in high needs schools.

### **General Statement of Reform:**

South Carolina leads the nation in its efforts to improve teacher quality and must continue to ensure that all teachers are “highly qualified.” In order to be “highly qualified” a teacher must have earned at least a bachelor’s degree, demonstrate content knowledge in each core content area he/she teaches, and not have any waivers from the requirements for full state certification.

### **Specific Breakdown of Possible Reform:**

We recommend legislation that will require all K-3 teachers and special education teachers to take a course in explicit and systematic phonics to become certified in using explicit and systematic phonics to teach reading and incorporate phonics into a comprehensive reading program no later than June 30, 2005. Investigate to determine if incentives could be provided to teachers who complete the training program in explicit and systematic phonics by June 30, 2004. In addition we recommend that the standards for teacher education programs in reading, elementary education and early childhood education should be revised to include explicit and systematic phonics as to ensure that all graduates of teacher education programs have preparation and can demonstrate their ability to implement the explicit and systematic phonics instruction in a comprehensive reading program.

Distance Learning is a relatively economical method of delivering high quality instruction to a large number of teachers and K-12 students. The distance learning capabilities at SCETV, the technical colleges, and the four-year colleges and universities should be made known to and used by educators throughout the state. Using this method, teachers can conveniently participate in professional development at their own school. Distance Learning provides an avenue to reach a large number of teachers in a short period of time.

We support Governor Sanford’s campaign platform to provide funding to school districts in order to reward meritorious teaching by expanding the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), which provides monetary rewards to teachers based on student achievement and teacher performance. It also provides a career continuum for teachers with compensation based on increased responsibilities and meritorious performance.

South Carolina must find a way to stabilize and strengthen the teacher workforce, especially in rural areas and low performing schools. These schools have great challenges in recruiting and retaining effective teachers. We recommend that teachers in these schools receive longevity bonuses for every five years that they serve, as long as they meet performance goals. Teachers should also be offered assistance with moving and housing expenses in order to relocate to those areas. In addition, teachers in subject and

geographic areas where there have historically been high turnover rates should be provided with a mentor who is either compensated for taking on additional duties or provided release time from teaching responsibilities.

Most teachers feel that paperwork required under our current system has taken away from teaching and planning time. We recommend an in-depth look into this problem and to eliminate any paper work that is not absolutely necessary to student's achievement.

We recommend that teacher education programs be encouraged to develop programs that would provide more time in student internships where interns are paid for some or all of their internship. Furman University is currently piloting a five-year preparation program that includes a partially paid internship that could serve as a model for other teacher education programs.

We recommend that South Carolina implement a plan to increase teacher salaries to the national average no later than 2008-2009 school year, with a significant increase coming no later than 2005-2006, when all teachers must be highly qualified as required by "No Child Left Behind." In addition, we recommend that step increases in the state's teachers' salary schedule be phased in for the 22<sup>nd</sup> through 28<sup>th</sup> years of a teacher's tenure as a retention measure for our state's most experienced teachers.

Many of the recommendations that we make for recruiting and retaining teachers also apply to school principals. The quality of principals is a key factor for solving many of the public education problems, whether it is discipline, teacher retention, teacher quality, morale, parental involvement or resulting academic performance. The technical and leadership qualities of the principal cannot be overstated. We recommend that the state continue to support a "Principals Leadership Program," requiring high standards for admission and seeking to develop the technical and personal traits of principals as effective educational leaders in the future years of reform.

#### **IV. Structural Reform**

##### **General Statement of Problem:**

South Carolina's fragmentation of governmental structure leads to inefficiency and loss of the ability to leverage expertise and resources.

On the topic of South Carolina's governmental structure, in The Printed Journal of Political Science, Dr. Fred Carter wrote that "It is frequently unresponsive to citizen's needs and, on the whole, is unaccountable to the Governor."

Presently the role of a school board member in South Carolina can mean different responsibilities from county to county. Complex tax issues relating to schools have an impact on "adequate and equitable" funding, especially in rural South Carolina.

All studies and reports reflect the fact that student transportation is a major expenditure to the education budget in South Carolina and is therefore a major area of concern. We are one of the few states that still runs our student transportation service. We should closely look at legislation that would bring us to a more efficient system via the replacement of equipment over 20 years in age, recruitment and retention of qualified drivers and mechanics, or perhaps even privatization.

### **General Statement of Reform:**

The Task Force recommends structural reform in three areas in order to bring about more efficiency in an educational government. We believe how we appoint, elect and train educational leaders is most important. How we handle our students' transportation is also an important factor for overall efficiency.

### **Specific Breakdown of Possible Reform:**

The task force supports the recommendation of the 1991 Restructuring Commission, five previous restructuring studies, the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee and the current Superintendent of Education, that the Superintendent of Education should be appointed by the Governor. Hence, the Governor would, by law, be the single point of accountability as the spokesperson and the key executive for all public education in the state.

We further recommend that all local school board members are elected and required to take appropriate training; therefore, making them accountable to their constituency and better trained for the position.

Student transportation is inferior in South Carolina and must be changed; therefore, we recommend that the present management at the state level be assessed and a guaranteed replacement cycle for existing bus fleets be instituted. (Example ten to twelve years), establish a basic minimum state specification on bus procurement categories. Price and less restrictive regulations are not determinants of bus safety.

After in-depth study, consider giving districts more local control similar to North Carolina's Block Grant system, which allows the flexibility to purchase buses according to district need. As new and additional programs, (i.e. charter schools, magnet schools, inter-district choice, etc.) are initiated, transportation costs must be addressed. Licensing procedures, regulated by federal and state DMV and SDE, should be reviewed for efficiency, and fees for licenses should reflect actual cost and be funded by the state.

## **V. Early Childhood**

### **General Statement of Problem:**

According to South Carolina Kids Count 2000-2001, “Too many children reach school without the readiness skills needed for success in learning, such as visual and auditory discrimination, memory recall, and knowledge of colors, letters, names of objects, etc. Likewise, some schools are not ready to respond appropriately to the varying developmental levels of children in the early grades. By the end of elementary school, significant numbers of students perform below minimum standards. As a result, too many students do not experience the success needed to create the motivation and engagement that sustain learning.”

In addition, according to The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, there have been two profound changes over the past several decades that have coincided to produce “a dramatically altered landscape for early childhood policy, service delivery and childrearing in the United States.” *First* “... an explosion of research in the neurobiological, behavioral, and social sciences has led to major advances in understanding the conditions that influence whether children get off to a promising or a worrisome start in life.” *Secondly* “...the capacity to use this knowledge constructively has been constrained by a number of dramatic transformations in the social and economic circumstances under which families with young children are living in the United States.”

A fragmented approach to early education services, coupled with multiple funding streams, limits the possible positive impact that a core approach to early education would have on the development of South Carolina’s children from birth to four.

### **General Statement of Reform:**

Early education in South Carolina is beginning to respond to the research and the changes that families are encountering. Continuing the work of early childhood, through an integrated system of all services affecting childbirth to four years will have profound impact on the development of South Carolina’s children.

### **Specific Breakdown of Possible Reform:**

To continue the work of early childhood services, through an *integrated system* of all services affecting a child’s first four years, the Task Force recommends that an Early Childhood Readiness Oversight Committee be formed. That committee would have the responsibility to investigate and recommend the coordination and integration of programmatic, administrative and fiscal policies and standards for all early education initiatives serving childbirth to four year of age. (I.e. DSS, DHEC, First Steps, State Department of Education’s early Childhood, Childcare Industry, Child-Find, Head Start, Early Head Start, and other state and federal programs pertaining to early education.)

It was noted that public school classes for four-year-old kindergarten are currently filled at the state recommended 20 students with two teachers- a one to ten student /teacher ratio. A “best practice” recommendation is sixteen students in a class with two teachers- a one to eight student/teacher ratio. It was also noted that K-4 public school classes test in both the spring and the fall, meaning that in some cases students are not placed until the spring and a waiting list is instituted in the school district. It is recommended that a

review of the current process for placement of K-4 students be enacted in order to ensure that those most at risk for readiness are served before other students are admitted.

Research states that children with developmental delays are more at risk of not being ready for school and require multiple services from providers. Presently South Carolina has been cited with a federal finding in the state BabyNet program that indicates South Carolina ranks poorly in several areas but especially in the area of identifying young children with developmental delays. BabyNet is currently under a restructuring in order to comply with the federal findings. Child Find, a component of the federally mandated program, should provide periodic screening, referrals and follow-ups to children with suspected developmental delays in school districts. Presently each school district, Babynet and/or community agencies interpret and address the Child Find program with varying degrees of frequency and methods of screening. It is recommended that a review of the federally mandated Child Find take place to assure consistent monthly screenings, referrals and follow-ups for developmentally delayed children, birth to 21 years, in each school district.

## **VI. Funding**

### **General Statement of Problem:**

We need to admit that South Carolina's educational funding system is complicated, piecemeal, not collaborative and not stable. How we deliver this funding is neither efficient nor effective for the education process. Many studies are before us, lawsuits are before us, and the opportunity is before us for a better financial future. Until South Carolina offers all its children the chance to excel, the state as a whole will not make significant progress.

### **General Statement of Reform:**

The Task Force recommends that an examination of South Carolina's current system of taxation, as it relates to educational funding, should focus on ways to ensure that stable, equitable and consistent revenue is secured.

### **Specific Breakdown of Possible Reform:**

Utilizing past and current research, the General Assembly needs to examine the current system of taxation as it relates to education funding and the mechanism by which we deliver funding in order to provide a more efficient and effective education process. For example, rather than the current system, we should consider block grants to local districts to provide for better flexibility, while making sure that we have a sound accountability process.

"Adequate education" and "equitable funding" should be defined so that the state can be certain that an infrastructure exists which provides for quality education through funding sources being used in an effective and efficient manner.

The magic of learning takes place in the interaction between teachers and students in the classroom and not from administrators in offices. It is in these classrooms and on this interaction where our resources and attention must focus. Our educational mandates need prioritization in relation to student achievement, and funding should be allocated accordingly.

## **VII. Higher Education**

### **General Statement of the Condition of Public Higher Education:**

South Carolina currently supports 33 institutions of higher education, including three “research universities,” sixteen technical colleges, eleven 4-year “teaching institutions” (making it twelve is USC Beaufort, which is moving into the ranks of four-year baccalaureate degree granting institutions), and four regional two-year campuses of the University of South Carolina. Together, the public institutions of higher education are responsible for educating approximately 82% of the State’s total undergraduate population. Nearly half of those (48%) are found in the State’s technical college system. The Commission on Higher Education (CHE), State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education, and the Tuition Grants Commission implement these higher education programs. Students may also apply for various forms of financial aid through the South Carolina Student Loan Corporation, a quasi-governmental corporation charged with administering a variety of state financial-aid programs.

Oversight of the State’s public higher education system is the responsibility of the Commission on Higher Education, a 14-member body comprised of gubernatorial appointees representing congressional districts, the state at large, and the various sectors of the higher education community. CHE is the “coordinating body,” with responsibility for academic program reviews, authority to approve new programs, data collection and analysis capability, and responsibility for allocating State funding pursuant to performance funding criteria. CHE is charged by law with reviewing institutions’ budget requests, including those for “below the line” items and capital budget requests. CHE then prepares a formal budget request for the Governor and General Assembly. Most public institutions of higher education that can afford to do so hire their own lobbyists to advance legislation and appropriations favorable to the institutions themselves. The result is a loose configuration of institutions pursuing individual agendas, which collaborate only when it suits their mutual self-interests. They exist as separate and distinct islands of self-interest. Simply prohibiting the use of state funds for lobbyists will not end this practice of having institutional lobbyists circumvent CHE influence over higher education policy. Institutional foundations would be expected merely to bring such lobbying efforts in house where they would then continue to pursue the same agendas as before on behalf of their respective schools.

State policy dictates the allocation of operational funding on the basis of performance and not student population alone. Performance funding was designed to enhance

accountability in higher education by rewarding institutions for behaving in ways that conform to desirable public goals. Over the past four years, the State has tended to emphasize direct assistance to students rather than target operational funding to the institutions. Naturally, to offset what they consider to be a reduction in state financial support, the institutions have adjusted tuition to offset the revenue loss. Between 1998 and 2002, average tuition at two of the State's premier research institutions increased 55%, average tuition for the teaching sector increased 67%, and in the two-year branches of USC, 59%. Heretofore, institutions have been constrained in their attempts to adjust tuition by a proviso in the annual appropriations act that limits tuition hikes for those institutions whose tuition is at or above the sector average. This has been a point of contention for the institutions who have expressed a desire to be free of any such constraints that would inhibit their ability to adjust tuition as their respective boards of trustees deem necessary.

The Governor's Workforce Education Task Force, in its report, *Pathways to Prosperity: Success for Every Student in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workplace*, recognized the significant role of the technical college system in educating and training students as they first enter the workforce and as they return for retraining throughout their careers. Ensuring that this sector obtains the funding necessary to ensure the physical space, equipment, and faculty necessary to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce is a matter of continuing concern. Since 1991-92, fall credit headcount enrollment has increased 32%. Most of the actual growth in public higher education, 93%, during this same period, has occurred in the technical college sector. In 2001, 53% of all first-time freshmen enrolled in a technical college.

The *Pathways* report recommended that South Carolina build on the system of articulation agreements between the secondary and post-secondary education sectors as well as agreements between and among institutions of higher education through statewide articulation agreements.

A key component of the Governor's education proposals has been the strengthening of the Commission on Higher Education from a coordinating body to a governing board or board of regents. In considering this and other topics affecting higher education and its role in South Carolina, the Task Force's deliberations were fueled by the following core values:

- Diversity of mission
- Equity of access
- Stewardship of resources
- Collaboration among institutions

The Task Force encourages the Governor to embrace these core values as he considers these recommendations and those of any other task forces or commissions which speak to issues in higher education.

### **General Statement of Possible Reforms:**

## **Role of the Commission on Higher Education**

- The role of the Commission on Higher Education should be enhanced so as to strengthen its role as coordinator for higher education. The Task Force believes that a strengthened and reconstituted Commission on Higher Education is in the best interest of South Carolina, enhancing its capacity to provide the foundation for a more diverse economy, a higher standard of living, and a healthier and more enjoyable quality of life.
- Strengthen the role of the Commission in overseeing and approving academic and degree programs so as to avoid further potential for ‘mission-creep,’ whereby an institution moves from one sector to another in the absence of formal approval by either CHE or the General Assembly.

## **State Funding for Higher Education**

- Examine state support for higher education to ensure that the institutions are deriving an appropriate level of operational revenue from state appropriations and tuition payments to operate the institutions in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.
- Examine the rate at which tuition is rising in order to determine if action is necessary to ensure continued affordability of a baccalaureate degree education for students and parents who are not benefiting from merit or need-based programs.

## **Student Advancement and Articulation Agreements**

- Maintain and expand articulation agreements, as necessary, between all technical colleges and four-year institutions of higher education.
- Examine the method of funding in light of the current system for awarding dual credit for technical courses taken at the high school level so as to reduce the opportunity for the state to pay for the same student twice-once as the student is included in the weighted pupil units by which state dollars are sent to local districts and again as the student’s enrollment at a state college is included in enrollment data used to measure institutional need.

## **Infrastructure and Facilities Investments, Operation and Maintenance**

- Incorporate data on facility usage and student population growth when making decisions about further capital investments on our public colleges and universities.
- Rely more heavily on CHE analysis and recommendations when advancing capital requests for funding.